



South Coast Repertory

STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Andy Knight,
Director of The Lab@SCR



adapted by Greg Banks
directed by H. Adam Harris

WELCOME TO THE THEATRE

Theatre is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. A performance is influenced by an audience, just as an audience is influenced by a performance. With this play, the artists and staff of South Coast Repertory have created a special new world for you. Sometimes that world is so exciting that you can barely hold still. But remember: once the play begins, you are connected to all the other people in the audience, as well as to the actors on the stage, because you're all in the same room. The actors can see you, hear you and feel you, just as you can see, hear and feel them. Your attention, involvement, responses and imagination are a real part of each and every performance. The play can actually be made better because of you!

STUDENT TIPS FOR THEATRE TRIPS

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Take your seat in the theatre before going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no chewing gum, eating or drinking in the building.
- No backpacks, cameras or electronic devices are permitted in the theatre.
- Feel free to talk quietly in your seats before the show.
- Show your appreciation by clapping for the actors at the end of the play.
- After the lights come back up, wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.

THEATRE VOCABULARY

- **Backstage** The space behind the acting area, unseen by the audience.
- **Blocking** The movement onstage designed by the director and performed by the actors.
- **Box Office** A windowed space at the front of the theatre building where tickets are sold.
- **Choreography** The art of creating and arranging dances onstage.
- **Cue** The last words or action of an actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor.
- **Downstage** The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time, stages were raked, or sloped, with the lower ("down") part closest to the audience, and the higher ("up") part farther away.
- **Green Room** A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests. The room's name comes from Elizabethan times, when actors waited on a real "green" (or patch of grass).
- **Matinee** A morning or afternoon performance of a play.
- **Props** All the hand-held items and stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.
- **Rehearsal** Time used by performers to practice privately before a performance in front of an audience.
- **Script** The text of the play, including dialogue and stage directions, all written by the playwright.
- **Upstage** The area of the stage farthest away from the audience and nearest to the back wall.



THE PLAY

THE STORY OF SNOW WHITE

The stage is set. The audience has gathered. And Snow White enters and begins to tell her story. She's interrupted by a dwarf—called Dwarf Four—who, in a panic,

tries to convince Snow White to stop and wait. After all, the *others* haven't arrived yet. How can they possibly tell the story without the rest of them? Has anyone seen them? Six shortish-looking men wandering around, carrying pick-axes, whistling a little tune...looking a bit lost? Anyone? No. No one has seen them.

Snow White, however, is determined to keep going. The others can join in when they arrive. There's just one problem, though. The story is *full* of characters, and there's only... two of them. No matter. Snow White and Dwarf Four will simply play all the roles. Get ready for some fun!

The story begins with the birth of Snow White and, not long after, the death of the Queen, Snow White's mother. A year later, the King remarries. Snow White's

stepmother, or Stepma, is a very beautiful woman, but she's also cruel, arrogant and vain. She spends hours a day gazing into her magic mirror, asking the same question over and over:

"Mirror on the wall, who in this land is the fairest of all?" Each time, the mirror answers, "You, my Queen, are the fairest of all."

But one day—not long after Snow White's eleventh birthday—Stepma's magic mirror responds with a different answer: "You, my Queen, may have a beauty quite rare, but Snow White is a thousand times more fair." Snow White's beauty—not just her outward appearance, but also her heart as pure as snow—has surpassed Stepma's.

In a jealous rage, Stepma commands a Huntsman to take Snow White deep into the forest and kill her. Stepma tells the Huntsman to bring back Snow White's lungs and liver as proof that the girl is dead. The Huntsman obeys and lures Snow White into the forest. But once they're there, the Huntsman can't bring himself to kill her. He lets the girl escape and returns to Stepma with the lungs and liver of a wild pig. Assuming they're Snow White's, Stepma fries the organs in a little salt and butter—and eats them.

Meanwhile, Snow White stumbles upon a little house in the woods. She knocks on the door, but no one answers. Hungry and exhausted, Snow White enters the empty house and falls asleep in



**Snow White costume
design by Ramzi Jneid.**



one of the small beds. Later that night, seven dwarfs return home after a long day of digging coal. All of them fall into their beds, but Dwarf Four notices that something is amiss. There's a young girl sleeping in his bed!

When Snow White awakens, she tells the dwarfs what brought her to their home. The dwarfs take pity on the girl and invite her to live with them. She accepts, and a beautiful friendship begins between Snow White and the seven dwarfs.

When Stepma discovers that Snow White is still alive and well, she takes matters into her own hands. She disguises herself as a poor old woman and journeys to the dwarfs' home. There, she finds Snow White alone and offers the young girl new laces for her corset. Stepma uses the laces to tighten Snow White's corset—tighter and tighter—until Snow White can no longer breathe and faints.

The seven dwarfs rescue Snow White when they return home. But the next day, Stepma comes again—this time in another disguise and carrying a poisoned apple. Snow White can't help but take pity on the mysterious stranger, and Stepma tricks Snow White into taking a bite of the poisoned apple. Snow White collapses.

This time, the dwarfs are unable to revive Snow White. Believing that she's dead, the heartbroken dwarfs place her in a glass coffin, where she remains for seven years.

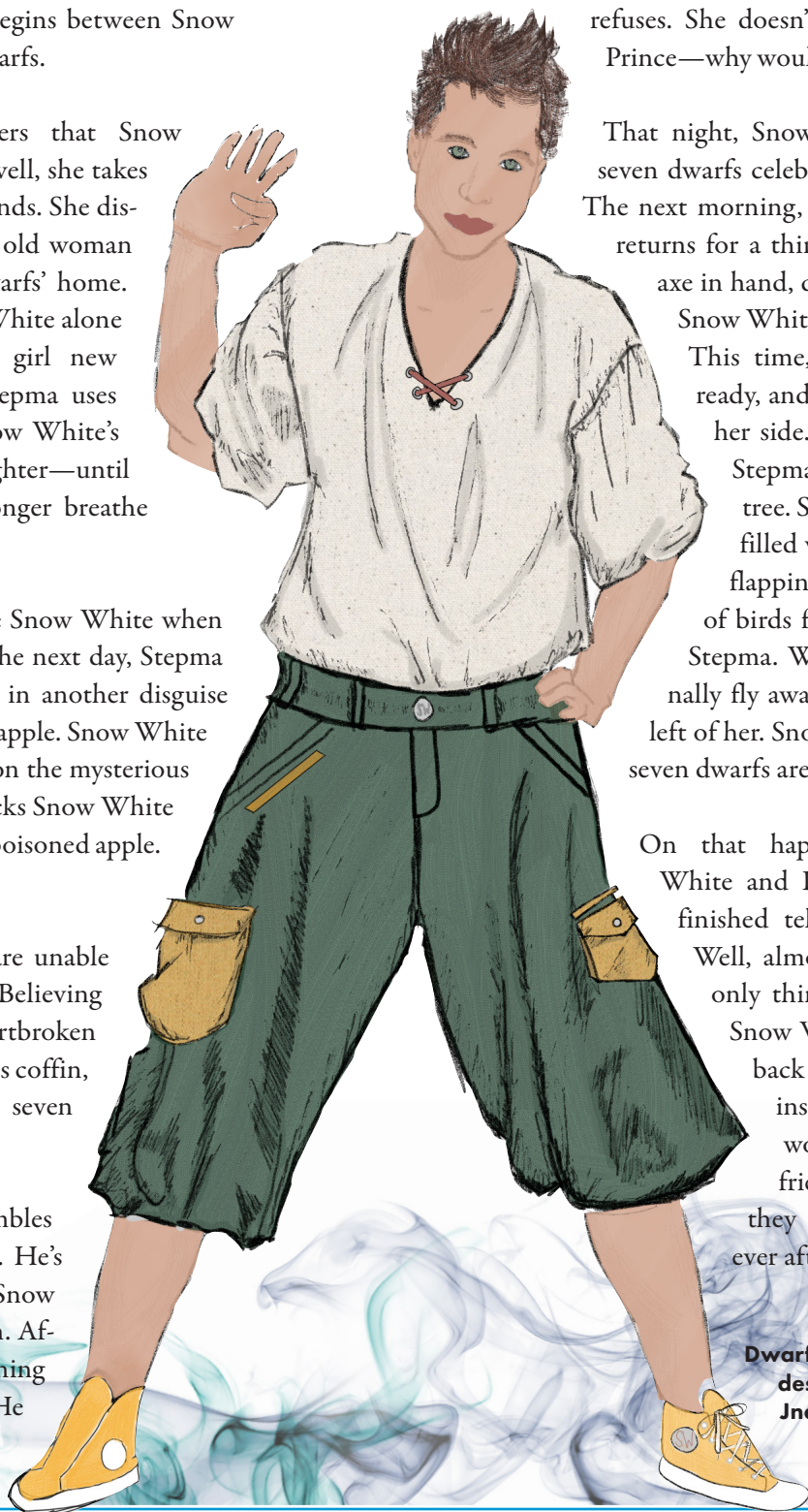
One day, a Prince stumbles upon the dwarfs' home. He's delighted when he sees Snow White in her glass coffin. After all, he's been searching for a princess to save. He

kisses Snow White and...nothing happens. She doesn't wake up. Undeterred, the Prince decides to bring Snow White (glass coffin and all) back to his castle. But as the dwarfs lift the coffin, they stumble, and the commotion dislodges the piece of poisoned apple stuck in Snow White's throat. Snow White instantly awakens. All are overjoyed, including the Prince, who proposes marriage to Snow White. But Snow White refuses. She doesn't even know the Prince—why would she *marry* him?

That night, Snow White and the seven dwarfs celebrate with a party. The next morning, however, Stepma returns for a third time—with an axe in hand, determined to kill Snow White once and for all. This time, Snow White is ready, and the dwarfs are at her side. After a struggle, Stepma's axe strikes a tree. Suddenly, the air is filled with the sound of flapping wings as a flock of birds fly out and attack Stepma. When the birds finally fly away, there's nothing left of her. Snow White and the seven dwarfs are finally safe.

On that happy note, Snow White and Dwarf Four have finished telling their story! Well, almost finished. The only thing to add is that Snow White never went back to the castle, but instead stayed in the woods with her friends. Oh, and they all lived happily ever after.

**Dwarf Four costume
design by Ramzi
Jneid.**



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

BEFORE THE SHOW

Snow White (or *Little Snow-White*, and now commonly called *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*) was first published in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm) in *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. However, the fairytale's origins can be found in folktales and myths that were passed down from storytellers to story-listeners for centuries prior to its initial publication.

1. Have your students read the *Grimms' Fairy Tales* version of *Snow White* on their own—or read it aloud as a class. The text can be found online here: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm053.html>. (Please note that 19th century versions of fairytales are a bit scarier than some young readers are accustomed to today, so we recommend giving it a read first to assess its appropriateness!)

After reading, ask your students to:

- a. Recall the plot's main events.
- b. Identify the story's themes and underlying messages.
- c. Write or tell their own versions of *Snow White*. How would they change the story and why? Would it have a different ending?

For a deeper dive, check out these other adaptations of *Snow White* from around the world: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/type0709.html>

2. *Folktales*. Before movies and television, the telling of tales out loud was one of the main sources of entertainment and helped to carry on the traditions, values and beliefs that were shared by the common *folk* of a country or region—that's why they're called *folktales*. (Fairytales are just folktales that include magic or supernatural creatures like fairies, giants, witches and dragons.) Besides *Snow White*, what are some other folktales or fairytales you've heard or read or seen in a movie or on TV? (Hint: Disney has turned a lot of them into movies.)
 - a. Folktales and fairytales usually include things

that can't happen in real life. What are some examples of that in *Snow White*?

- b. Fairytales and most folktales have happy endings. Is that true of *Snow White*?
 - c. Fairytales are sometimes called "wonder tales" because of the wondrous things that happen in them. Can you think of modern-day stories (from movies, television, books or comics) that include wondrous characters or events?
3. Have the students play "Telephone": One student tells a simple story (about a paragraph long) to another student; the second student tells the story to a third student; the third tells it to a fourth; and so on. How does the story change from the first telling to the last? (The first person in the chain might want to write their story down, so they can refer to it to show how it has changed along the way.)
 4. Discuss the differences between a prose story (told out loud or written down) and a drama. Explore what it means to "adapt" a story into a play.
 - a. Have the students talk about how they think the story of *Snow White* will be brought to life in South Coast Repertory's stage version.
 - b. What might the scenery on stage look like?
 - c. What about the costumes?
 - d. Will there be songs?
 5. Discuss the different jobs involved to bring a production like *Snow White* to life. Have the students research the occupations on this list and share what they find with the class:
 - a. Actor
 - b. Director
 - c. Playwright
 - d. Composer
 - e. Music Director
 - f. Designer
 - g. Stage Manager
 - h. Stage Crew

WORDS! WORDS! WORDS!

Listen for the following words during the performance.

Cherish: to love, value or show affection for
Arrogant: having an exaggerated sense of one's own importance
Stunning: extremely beautiful or impressive
Vicious: aggressively cruel or violent
Squeamish: easily made to feel sick, faint or disgusted
Precious: of great value
Nuisance: something that is annoying or unpleasant
Vermín: wild animals that are perceived to be dirty or harmful
Flounce: to move with jerky or bouncy motions
Quaint: attractively old-fashioned

Can you unscramble these words from the list above? (Answers on page 9.)

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Soiciuv | 6. Unnsingt |
| 2. Qintau | 7. Rraagont |
| 3. Suoicerp | 8. Mishasque |
| 4. Hercish | 9. Noucelf |
| 5. Ervnim | 10. Sainuenc |

BRINGING SNOW WHITE FROM PAGE TO STAGE

South Coast Repertory's production of *Snow White* is directed by H. Adam Harris. In this interview, Harris talks about his job as director and the inspiration behind the production.

South Coast Repertory:

You're directing SCR's production of *Snow White*. What does a director do?

H. Adam Harris: A director's job is to lead the actors and designers in the telling of the story. Often it means being a combination of teacher, coach, counselor and principal while keeping the process fun!

SCR: What excites you about this version of *Snow White*?

HAH: In this version of *Snow White*, rather than hear-



Director H. Adam Harris

ing it from a third-person narrative, we hear it as a first-person perspective. I believe great things happen when we tell our own story, and in this version, *Snow White* gets to do exactly that!

SCR: What did you and the designers discuss when dreaming up the physical production—i.e., the sets, costumes, etc.?

HAH: I took a trip to the Huntington Botanical Gardens and that served as the basis of what the set would look like. We've all tried to anchor the story in a forest glade while honoring the theatrical nature of the storytelling.

SCR: What should audiences coming to *Snow White* be prepared for?

HAH: Be prepared for fast character changes, beautiful costumes, audience interaction, laughter and a heart-filled adventure!

AFTER THE SHOW

Discussion about the Theatre

Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance and ask the students about their experience attending live theatre.

1. What was the first thing you noticed about the theatre? What did the stage look like?
2. Discuss the technical elements of the production—the sets, costumes, lights and sound. Ask the students what they liked best and why. How did these elements help Snow White and Dwarf Four tell their story?
3. Discuss the ways in which the play was surprising. Was the story told in the same way that you imagined it would be?
4. How did two actors transform into so many characters? How did they change their voices and physicality?

- a. The actor playing Dwarf Four also plays all the other dwarfs. What are some of the personality traits he gave different dwarfs to distinguish them from one another?

5. How is attending a live performance different from attending a movie? How does your experience change when you know that the story is being performed live and that the actors can see and hear you?

Discussion about the Play


1. What was your favorite moment in the play? What was the funniest? What was the most surprising?
2. Did you notice any differences between the original fairytale and the stage adaptation? How has the story's ending changed?
3. Why was Stepma jealous of Snow White? Beyond her outward appearance, what made Snow White more beautiful than her stepmother?
4. What did Snow White learn about herself over the course of the play—and how did she learn it?

Snow White set design by Fred Kinney.



ACTIVITIES

1. Knock-Knock Jokes: The dwarfs get a real kick out of knock-knock jokes. Have each student share their favorite knock-knock jokes—or make up new ones!—and compile a booklet for whenever the class needs a laugh.
2. Flora and Fauna: The dwarfs teach Snow White all about the flowers and animals that live in the forest. Have each student research a forest wildflower and forest animal and share their research with the class. (You'll find some resources at the end of this study guide to give you a head start.)
3. A Change in Perspective: Snow White and Dwarf Four tell their story from their point of view. But perhaps other characters have a different take on things. Reimagine the story of *Snow White* from another character's perspective. How would Stepma tell the story of what happened? How would the Huntsman? Or Dwarfs One, Two, Three, Five, Six or Seven? Write a monologue from another character's perspective—and have fun with it!



LETTERS OF THANKS

Write a letter of thanks to SCR and describe the most memorable aspects of attending a performance of *Snow White*.

South Coast Repertory
Attn: TYA
PO Box 2197
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197

RESOURCES

MORE ABOUT SNOW WHITE

The text of the original 1812 Brothers Grimm *Snow White*, translated by D.L. Ashliman:
<https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm053.html>

Other adaptations of *Snow White* from around the world: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/type0709.html>

“The History of Snow White” from Elgiva Theatre: <https://elgiva.com/snow-white-history/>

“The Twisted History of Snow White” by Adam Gidwitz:
<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-now/2013/10/24/the-twisted-history-of-snow-white>

MORE ABOUT ADAPTOR/PLAYWRIGHT GREG BANKS

Greg Banks’ official website: <https://www.gregbankstheatredirector.co.uk/>

WOODLAND FLOWERS AND ANIMALS

Interesting facts about wildflowers from Just Fun Facts: <http://justfunfacts.com/interesting-facts-about-wildflowers/>

Fun forest facts for kids from Growing Play: <https://www.growingplay.com/2022/02/forest-facts-for-kids/>

Wildflowers of the United States: <https://uswildflowers.com/>

Animals of the forest from Animal Fun Facts:
<https://www.animalfunfacts.net/knowledge/362-animals-of-the-forest.html>

Forest animals from Misfit Animals: <https://misfitanimals.com/animals/forest-animals/>

Wildlife from the California Forest Foundation: <https://www.calforestfoundation.org/wildlife>

Wildlife of the Redwood Parks from the National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/redw/learn/nature/animals.htm>

WORD SCRAMBLE ANSWER KEY:

1. Vicious
2. Quaint
3. Precious
4. Cherish
5. Vermin
6. Stunning
7. Arrogant
8. Squeamish
9. Flounce
10. Nuisance

